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SUBJECT: FNLA IMPLODING?

Classified By: (U) Classified by Ambassador Dan Mozena, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) The National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) - one of the triumvirate of Angolan independence movements and the third largest opposition party in parliament - appears increasingly on the verge of rupture. A convoluted dispute over leadership has left Lucas Ngonda in charge of the FNLA, after the Constitutional Court imposed his assumption of the presidency. FNLA parliamentary leader Ngola Kubango was forced by the same court decision to renounce the presidency of his party. Kubango told DCM December 3 that he respected the legal institutions of his country, but complained vehemently that the decision was an injustice. He insisted that Ngonda had no right to the position, had in fact previously left the party, and was being used by the ruling MPLA to divide the FNLA.

12. (C) Comment: We are certainly not in a position to judge the merits of Ngonda's elevation to the leadership of the FNLA. However, the increasingly public split certainly does neither the party nor the opposition as a whole any good. The FNLA has three seats in the National Assembly and has thus far played a constructive role in the constitutional drafting process. The state-owned "Jornal de Angola" - which typically ignores the FNLA completely - ran a half-page article favorable to Ngonda on December 10. The article noted that Kubango faced censure or worse from the FNLA for failure to support the elevation of Ngonda. If FNLA parliamentarians focus on the schism, as we expect they will, their work on the constitution can only suffer. End Comment.

MOZENA